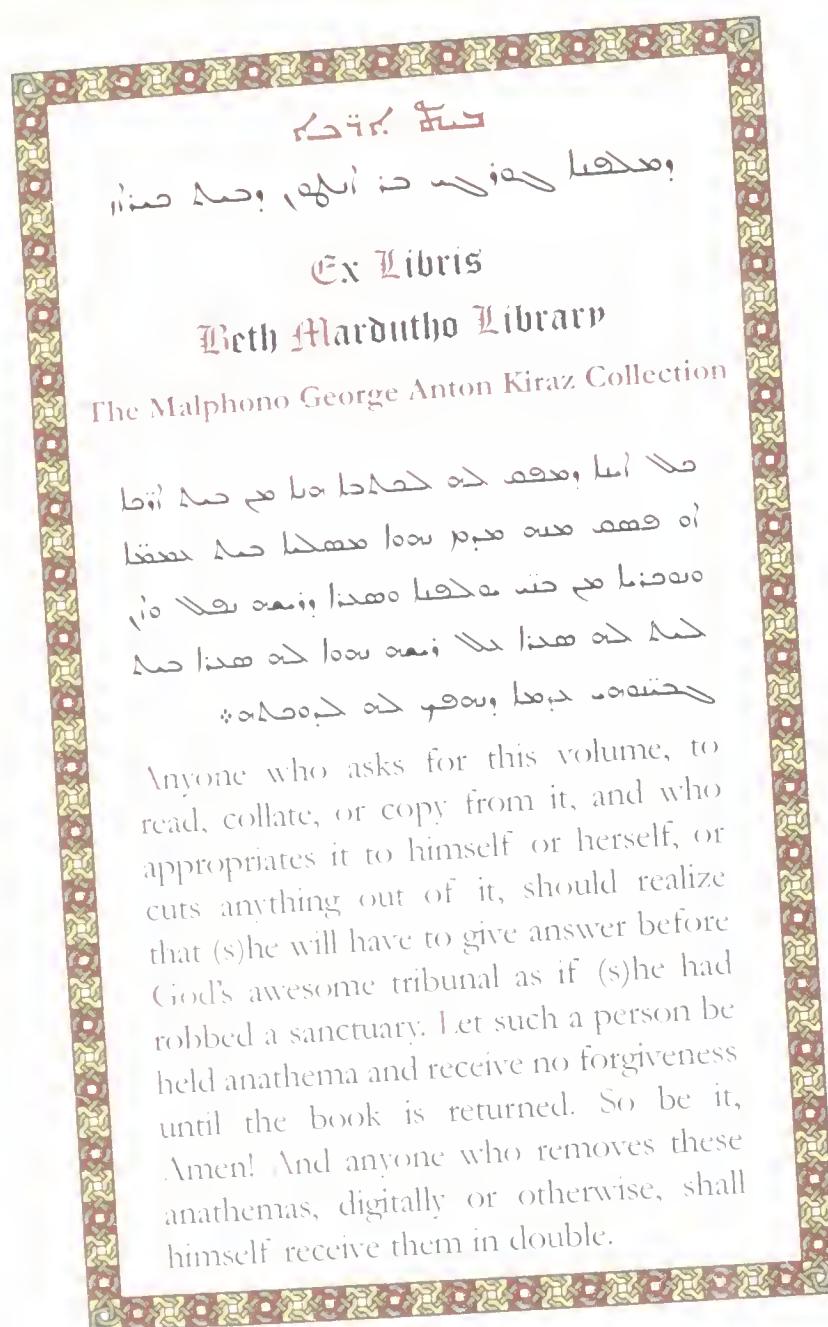


MY MISSION TO THE

MIDDLE EAST

by

Mar Athanasius Y. Samuel,  
Syrian Orthodox Archbishop of  
the United States and Canada



متحف قصيم (جناز)





What is to follow is a brief account of my recent visit to the Middle East. When I left the United States on September 15, 1971, I never dreamed that my journey to our ancient homeland would also prove to include an historic visit to Europe and my participation in the consecration of both the new Coptic Pope of Alexandria and of our new Apostolic Delegate to our Church in India. My mission was undertaken first and foremost to attend and participate in the important meetings of our Holy Synod, convoked by His Holiness our Patriarch in Lebanon from September 20-25, 1971. During his visit to our Archdiocese in late Spring of 1971, His Holiness had insisted upon my presence at the convening of our Holy Synod. I felt it my deepest obligation and duty to represent our beloved Archdiocese at the Holy Synod, and felt very proud to be able to do so.

It was truly a great source of joy for me to see how wonderfully our Church and faithful are progressing in both the Middle East and Europe. I bring to you with these few pages the fatherly blessing of our beloved Patriarch Mar Ignatius Yacoub III and the warmest regards of our dear brothers and sisters across the Atlantic.

Having organized two new Archdiocesan parishes one in Montreal and the other in Chicago, I was able to obtain two fine priests from Beirut to serve as the pastors of our new parishes. Rev. Father Issa Tabbakh is now our priest in Montreal and Rev. Father Abdallah Shara has come to be our pastor in Chicago.

In conclusion, I wish to express my profound gratitude to God's loving providence for permitting me to carry out my mission and bringing it to fruition. I also wish to thank our Lord for bringing me back home



safely to my beloved Archdiocese. Likewise, I thank our Lord for having entrusted such a wonderful Archdiocese to my care, and I pray that the blessings of Almighty God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you and your dear ones both now and always.



On September 15, 1971, I left Kennedy Airport for Beirut. The following day I arrived in the Lebanese capital where I was welcomed by a body of our archbishops and clergy and a large number of our families. On the morning of September 20, 1971, the assembly of our Church's hierarchy known as the Holy Synod was formally opened at St. Ephrem's Seminary in Atchani, Lebanon. Eleven archbishops together with His Holiness our Patriarch were present. Each day three sessions were held by the Synod, one in the morning, a second in the afternoon, and a third following the evening meal, each presided over by His Holiness Ignatius Yacoub III. The Holy Synod discussed at length the problems facing the Church in the modern world. Among the decisions reached by the assembly were the following: reduction of the fasting period prior to the reception of Holy Communion to three hours for clergy and laity, the permission to celebrate the Holy Liturgy in the evening, the establishment of an annual feast to be celebrated each year in our cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul (Beirut, Lebanon) on New Sunday to commemorate the miraculous appear of our Lady the Virgin Mary in our cathedral in Beirut, the creation of a special training program for our deacons who wish to become priests, and the establishment of a yearly conference for all the clergy of our Church. Moreover, the Synod requested that His Holiness the Patriarch petition our parishes in South America to see if our brothers in Latin America have the possibility of supporting a bishop for our faithful in South America. The Synod also approved the consecration of a new metropolitan, Timotheus Afram Aboudi, as Apostolic Delegate to our Church in India. The Holy Synod completed its work and adjourned on September 25, 1971.



## The Göttingen Conference

On Saturday, October 2, 1971, His Holiness Mar Ignatius Yacoub III left Damascus for West Germany accompanied by Mar Severius Zakka Iwas, Archbishop of Baghdad and Basra, Mar Gregorius Saliba Shamoun, Archbishop of Mosul, and myself, together with Father Matta Saliba, His Holiness's secretary. The purpose of our visit to Germany was two fold, namely, to attend a special conference at Göttingen University of Syriac scholars and Orientalists from all over the world and also to visit our families who have emigrated to West Germany. Munich was our first stop. Here, we were met by a large number of our faithful living in and around the city. From Munich we flew onto Frankfurt where we were warmly welcomed by Dr. Gernot Wiezner of Göttingen University, Friedrich Wilhelm Strothmann, son of Göttingen University's Dr. W. Strothmann, Dr. Helga Anshütz, and Rev. Dr. Paul Harb, O.L.M. of Holy Spirit Seminary (Kaslik, Lebanon). We were also joyeously received by many of our Frankfurt families and by our local priest, Father Fetros Oglinc. Cameras from Frankfurt Television were on hand at the airport to record our arrivals. We now left for Göttingen. Upon our arrival, we were welcomed by representatives of Göttingen University and by a large group of West German news reporters and by T.V. cameramen. The following morning, Sunday, October 3, 1971, His Holiness celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the chapel of Göttingen University assisted by myself. The Liturgy was attended by the President of Göttingen University and by the University's various deans and staff, together with a large number of students.



On Monday, October 4, 1971, Mar Ignatius Yacoub III and his party toured Göttingen University and met with the University's top officials. About thirty scholars had now gathered at Göttingen University for the special conference mentioned earlier. The conference was officially opened on October 4, 1971 and continued until the 8th of October. Each day the assembly of scholars convened for three general sessions. The individual scholars were each responsible to deliver a paper to the conference on either a specific aspect or person of Syriac literature and tradition. The lectures were given in English, French, and German, but chiefly in German. Each of us was provided with earphones for the immediate translation of a paper when delivered in a language that we did not know. His Holiness presented the last paper of the conference, and was introduced to the assembled body of scholars by Göttingen University's Dr. W. Strothmann, the person responsible for the organization of the conference. Dr. Strothmann's introduction was made in Syriac. I was personally amazed and extremely pleased to see so many scholars from all over the world who knew our Syriac language and tradition so well. These people have given their lives over to the study of our literature and history, and I must say that they know our own tradition far better than many of us. If these scholars, none of whom are Syrian, know and love our own literature and history so very much, how much more should we, both clergy and laity, who are Syrian. Thanks to this conference, my pride in our literary and historical past has grown immensely.

Following the conference, we visited many other centers of learning, churches, and religious institutions, both Catholic and



rotestant, in West Germany. We celebrated our Holy Liturgy in every city that we visited, thus giving many Germans a chance to see and hear our liturgical tradition. In our travels through West Germany we had many opportunities to meet with our faithful who have emigrated to West Germany from the Middle East. Needless to say, they were all very glad to see us.

#### Our Visit to the World Council of Churches

##### Headquarters in Geneva

On Sunday, October 17, 1971, we flew from Frankfurt to Geneva, Switzerland. Dr. Strothmann and Dr. Weizmer had come to Frankfurt to bid us farewell. They brought with them the very good news that Göttingen University had just been able to locate the means of housing in Beirut, at a special center, the many ancient manuscripts of both our Patriarchate in Damascus and of our various monasteries in the Middle East. This news delighted us all.

At 3:30 that same afternoon, we arrived in Geneva, Switzerland, and were officially welcomed by the Assistant Secretary of the World Council of Churches and by Rev. Dr. C.K. Joseph, our representative to the Council. We had come to Geneva in order to pay a visit to the World Council of Churches and reaffirm our interest in the wonderful work of the Council. Following our arrival, we were immediately taken to the headquarters of the World Council of Churches, where His Holiness and each of us were warmly received by Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. His Holiness and Dr. Blake spoke at length concerning the relationship between our Syrian Orthodox



Church of Antioch and the other member Churches of the World Council of Churches. At 8:00 that evening, we accompanied His Holiness to a special banquet arranged by Dr. Blake in one of Geneva's finest hotels. The banquet was attended by the executive staff of the World Council of Churches and other important dignitaries. Dr. Blake again welcomed His Holiness to Geneva. Rev. C.K. Joseph also addressed the banquet, and spoke of the great dedication and achievements of His Holiness Mar Ignatius Yacoub III. Our Patriarch then delivered an address in English to those assembled. His Holiness mentioned his great happiness to be able to visit the World Council of Churches and praised the Council for its work for all mankind and for its leadership in the Ecumenical Movement.

During our week's stay in Geneva, we visited the various departments of the World Council of Churches and other important centers in Geneva. On Sunday, October 24, 1971, His Holiness, assisted by myself, celebrated the Holy Liturgy in Geneva. Dr. Blake and the members of his staff attended the service. Moreover, many of our families living in and around Geneva were present. Later in the day, we left Geneva for Rome, arriving at 3:45 in the afternoon.

#### Our Visit to Pope Paul VI

A new and important step was taken along the way of Christian unity by the historic visit of His Holiness Mar Ignatius Yacoub III, Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, to Rome as the guest of His Holiness Pope Paul VI. This visit, the first for the Syrian Patriarch, took place between October 24 and 27, 1971. What is to follow will be an attempt to present the highlights of this historic visit.



Arrival in Rome of the Syrian  
Patriarch of Antioch

Mar Ignatius Yacoub III arrived at Rome's Fiumicino Airport at 3:45 on the afternoon of Sunday, October 24, 1971, and was received by an official reception party headed by Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, President of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. Accompanying the Patriarch, whose visit to Rome culminated a special European tour by the Supreme Head of the Syrian Orthodox Church, were three prelates of our Syrian Church of Antioch, namely, Mar Severius Zakka Iwas, Archbishop of Baghdad and Basra, and Mar Gregorius Saliba Shamoun, Archbishop of Mosul, and myself, together with Father Matta Saliba, the Patriarch's secretary. We were now taken to the Lateran Palace, where a special wing of apartments had been prepared as living quarters for the Pope's visiting guests.

The First Meeting of the Pope  
and the Patriarch

At 11:00 on Monday morning, October 25, 1971, the two Supreme Heads met at the door of Pope Paul's study and immediately embraced in a moving exchange of peace. The two Church Leaders met privately for half an hour, after which those of us accompanying the Patriarch were ushered into the Pope's quarters and were introduced to His Holiness the Pope. Pope Paul, in turn, introduced some important Vatican officials to Mar Ignatius Yacoub III and ourselves. These officials were headed by Cardinal Jean Villot, Vatican Secretary of State.



An exchange of gifts followed. Pope Paul presented His Holiness the Patriarch with a golden pectoral cross and a special Papal medallion, together with some volumes published by the Vatican Press. His Holiness the Patriarch presented Pope Paul with a crucifix and an ornate Oriental coffer, plus a collection of works written by His Holiness the Syrian Patriarch.

From the Pope's office, our two parties proceeded to the Chapel of St. Matilda in the Papal Palace, where a special joint prayer service was now conducted. The service opened with the chanting of the Latin hymn Veni, Creator Spiritus:

Creator-Spirit, all divine  
Come, visit every soul of thine,  
And fill with thy celestial flame  
The hearts which thou thyself didst frame.

O gift of God, thine is the sweet  
Consoling name of Paraclete  
And spring of life and fire of love  
And unction flowing from above.

The mystic sevenfold gifts are thine,  
Finger of God's right hand divine;  
The Father's promise sent to teach  
The tongue a rich and heavenly speech.

Kindle with fire brought from above  
Each sense, and fill our hearts with love;  
And grant our flesh, so weak and frail,  
The strength of thine which cannot fail.

Drive far away our deadly foe,  
And grant us thy true peace to know;  
So we, led by thy guidance still,  
May safely pass through every ill.

To us, through thee, the grace be shown  
To know the Father and the Son;  
And Spirit of them both, may we  
Forever rest our faith in thee.

To God the Father let us sing,  
To God the Son, our risen King,  
And equally let us adore  
The Spirit, God forevermore. Amen.



This hymn was followed by a special prayer of invocation offered by the Pope, asking God to enlighten the hearts of all present by the Holy Spirit. A reading from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians (2: 5-11) followed. The reading was followed by a special Syriac responsorial hymn commenced by the Patriarch and then shared in by the rest of us. Upon completion of this hymn, the Patriarch addressed the following words in English to Pope Paul:

Your Holiness,

In these joyous moments, we deem it our earnest duty, in our capacity as the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East and the Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church, to hail Your Holiness and to greet Your Holy See in Your notable person, since today is a very unique and important day in the history of our two Apostolic Churches.

After 1520 years of break, mutual anathemas and the like, the heads of these two most ancient Churches in Christendom meet each other as brothers in an atmosphere of love and fraternity. Time is a healer of all wounds. It was at Chalcedon in 451 that the break took place. But now both Churches recognize that what took place there, was unfortunately, a stab to the heart of Christendom.

Thank God, those days of unhappy relations are now a thing of the past; and today there is real love and cooperation between our two Apostolic Sees, and Christian communion in general.

In the 20th century there has never been a movement more fruitful than the ecumenical movement, and we recognize with appreciation the constructive role Your Holiness' illustrious predecessor and your good self have played in this field. We on our part look forward to the day when we will have even a greater visible unity and that too without sacrificing our individuality and the cultural contribution each of our Churches can make towards the speedy spreading of the Kingdom of God on earth.



Your Holiness, please accept our sincere gratitude for your brotherly love and hospitality. May God protect Your good self and bless the great Church which, in the Providence of God, Your Holiness heads.

Upon completion of the Patriarch's address, the Pope delivered the following discourse:

Your Holiness,

With joy we extend our fraternal greeting as we welcome you to our home. In your person we salute a Church which sees in the faith and devotion of the apostolic community of Antioch the roots and foundation of its own Christian witness. We are particularly happy to welcome an exalted visitor from Damascus, where, in receiving the holy waters of baptism, the Apostle of the Nations, whose name we bear, began that life of total commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ which was to lead him to this city of Rome and the supreme sacrifice of his life out of love for that Lord.

Nine years ago, Your Holiness accepted the invitation of our predecessor of venerated memory, John XXIII, to be represented at the Second Vatican Council by a delegated observer. Since that time the exchange of letters between us and the visit of qualified members of our Church to Your Holiness have helped strengthen the relations between our Churches. Now we have the joy of meeting in person so that we may share the thoughts and desires which animate us as we strive to fulfil God's wish for His Church and for the world redeemed by the precious Blood of His Son.

The history of the relations between our Churches shows many lights and shadows. We recognize that difficulties which have been created over centuries are not always easily overcome. Each of us is motivated by a sincere desire to be faithful to our Fathers in the faith and to the tradition they have handed down to us. Yet this very desire to be faithful to them impels us to search with ever greater zeal for the realization of full communion with each other.



We share a common sacramental life and a common Apostolic tradition, particularly as affirmed in what is popularly called the Nicene Creed. The dogmatic definitions of the first three Ecumenical Councils form part of our common heritage. Thus we confess together the mystery of the Word of God, become one of us to save us and to permit us to become in Him sons of God and brothers of each other.

It is in total submission to this Lord and Saviour, God the Son Incarnate, that we will be able to find the way towards that reconciliation which will bring us to perfect communion. The Syrian Orthodox Church in union with her sister Oriental Orthodox Churches, meeting in Addis Ababa in 1965, has already determined to press forward for a dialogue which will help overcome the misunderstandings of the past. Already theologians are working with renewed effort to throw new light on the mystery of the one Lord Jesus Christ. If they recognize that there are still differences in the theological interpretation of this mystery of Christ because of different ecclesiastical and theological traditions, they are convinced, however, that these various formulations can be understood along the lines of the faith of the early councils, which is the faith we also profess (cf. Pope Pius XII, in Encyclical Sempiterius Rex, A.A.S. 1951, pp. 636-637).

We, as pastors, can encourage the common efforts being made for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of this mystery which, far from raising doubts about our two different ecclesiastical traditions, can reinforce them and show the basic harmony which exists between them.

The task is the more urgent because of the demands which are being made upon the Churches today. In a world which is struggling to give birth to new ideas, to new developments which can enable all men to share in the gifts of God's creation, to new relationships between men and nations which will ensure peace with justice, we are called to proclaim the "one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God who is Father of all, over all, through all and within all" (Ephesians 4: 5-6).



If we can carry on this task in fraternal communion we will contribute in an even more perfect way to that service of the world which is an essential part of the mission of the Church. We will be fulfilling our vocation to see the mystery of the compassion of God translated into Christian compassion between men and for men.

In the visit of Your Holiness we see a new testimony to our common desire to carry out this mission and fulfil this vocation. As we welcome you, we pray that God may guide our steps for the glory of His name and the peace and reconciliation of all those who are called to be His sons.

Having delivered his address, Pope Paul now offered up the following:

My dear Brethren, let us pray to the God of our fathers, Who sent His only begotten Son to redeem us through His cross and resurrection, that He may be pleased to preserve the wonders of His power and His mercy in His Church.

A series of petitions were now offered up for Pope Paul and Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub III, that the Lord might always direct their steps, and for all faithful Christians and public authorities throughout the world, together with all who are suffering trials and afflictions and all who are seeking the light of Christ. Each of these petitions was followed by the joint response of all present: "Lord, hear our prayer." His Holiness and ourselves now continued with a series of similar petitions in Syriac, upon completion of which all present joined in the recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

Following the Lord's Prayer, Pope Paul extended to all present his benediction in Latin, as did His Holiness Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub III



in Syriac. Then the two Church Heads embraced once again in a kiss of peace at the door of the Chapel, after which the Pope returned to his quarters and the Patriarch and his retinue to the Lateran Palace, accompanied by Cardinal Willebrands and other members of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

#### Additional Visits and Meetings

During his stay in Rome, Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub III visited many of the Eternal City's churches and sites, including St. Peter's Basilica, the Catacombs, the Vatican Library, and the Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies. A reception was held in honor of His Holiness the Patriarch at Rome's Hotel Columbus, and numerous officials came to extend their welcome and greetings to the Syrian Patriarch. Among the many persons who came to greet the Patriarch were members of the synod of Catholic prelates then meeting in Rome.

One of the Patriarch's important meetings during his stay in Rome was his brotherly visit to the Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Vicariate in Rome's Campo Marzio, where he met with his brother in Christ Mar Ignatius Antonius II Hayek, Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Antioch. Upon his arrival at Campo Marzio, the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch was greeted by those assembled with a traditional Syriac hymn of welcome. Afterwards, His Holiness the Patriarch visited the Syrian Catholic Chapel of the Virgin in Campo Marzio. During the visit to Campo Marzio, the two Patriarchs



had the opportunity of speaking to each other in an atmosphere which was characterized by brotherly love and understanding. His Holiness Mar Ignatius Yacoub III invited his brother the Syrian Catholic Patriarch to dine with him and his party back at the Lateran, and Mar Ignatius Antonius II warmly accepted, and, accompanied by Archbishop Clemis Ignatius Mansourati, Resident Representative of the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate in Rome, Mar Athanasius Yuhanon Bakose, Syrian Catholic Archbishop of Baghdad, and Mar E. Joseph Mounayer, dined with His Holiness Ignatius Yacoub III at the Lateran.

#### The Patriarch's Farewell Meeting

##### with the Pope

This final meeting of the two Church Heads took place at 10:00 on the morning of October 27, 1971 in the Synodal Hall of the Vatican. Mar Ignatius Yacoub III arrived a little early and met with some of the Eastern Catholic Patriarchs who had gathered to welcome His Holiness the Patriarch as he waited for his final meeting with Pope Paul. The Catholic Patriarchs present were Cardinal Stephanos I Sidarouss, Coptic Catholic Patriarch of Alexandria, Maximos V Hakim, Melkite Catholic Patriarch, Ignatius Antonius II Hayek, Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Antioch, Paul II Cheikho, Chaldean Patriarch of Babylonia, and Ignatius Peter XVI Batanian, Armenian Catholic Patriarch of Cilicia. After this, Paul VI and Ignatius Yacoub III met in the Synodal Hall and again embraced in a kiss of peace amid the loud applause of the Catholic prelates who had gathered in Rome for a special synod of the Catholic Church. In the name of all the assembled prelates, Cardinal Leon Duval



welcomed the Syrian Patriarch. Pope Paul now delivered the following:

Your Holiness:

Before this assembly of chosen representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, we would like to express once more our joy and our gratitude to God that we have had the opportunity to meet with the spiritual head of the Syrian Orthodox Church in an atmosphere of prayer, openness of spirit and fraternal respect and comprehension.

Throughout the centuries, in times of glory and in times of great suffering, your Church has given witness to Our Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God made man for our salvation. Preachers, scholars and pastors have all contributed to deepening the understanding of the Incarnation of the Son of God and to making the significance of God's condescension towards man a living reality for your people. Many of them bore witness to their faith by the supreme sacrifice of their lives.

We are happy that Your Holiness has personally been able to visit the Church of Rome which, under God's grace, has also struggled to fulfil its mission through the devoted actions of its own teachers, pastors and witnesses to her faith.

These Fathers in the faith and these saints and martyr call out to us to apply ourselves with renewed dedication to that mission, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who is ever ready to offer us new light and strength. We ourself and our brothers in the episcopate, with humility but also with great confidence, are determined to listen to these promptings of the Spirit and to strive to carry them out to the best of our ability. That is the underlying principle of the work of this Synod of Bishops which is gathered here and which extends today its heartfelt greeting to Your Holiness.



All of us are encouraged by the fact that your own Church, in union with your sister Oriental Orthodox Churches, is also actively engaged in searching for new ways to carry on her mission in a spirit of unity and docility to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. Your visit to us makes us even more confident that our Churches will find means for greater cooperation in our common task and, at the same time, will open up the road to that full communion so ardently desired by all of us.

As we pray that the Lord of the Church may lead us to full reconciliation, we are mindful also of the particular needs of the Middle East where so many of your faithful are to be found. May this meeting with Your Holiness be a new stimulus to all Christians, especially to those of that area, to work for reconciliation in Christ among themselves and to search out, with imagination and tenacity, a durable peace with justice for all who dwell in those lands so dear to us.

Your Holiness, again we express our heartfelt thanks for your visit. As we take leave of you now, we do so with gratitude to God for what he has permitted us to accomplish up to now, with renewed confidence that the Holy Spirit will continue to show us the ways to accomplish the divine will, and with our prayers that almighty God will abundantly bless Your Holiness and all the clergy and faithful of your Church.

Following the Pope's message, His Holiness the Patriarch addressed the following words to all present:

Your Holiness:

We wish to express our gratitude to Your Holiness, to His Eminence, the President Delegate, and to the representatives of the Synod of Bishops, for this opportunity to reveal what lies in our heart as we prepare to leave the city of Rome.

We and our brothers the metropolitans who have accompanied us on this historic visit are deeply grateful for the love and respect Your Holiness and your collaborators have shown us.



We are also thankful to have been able to visit this city blessed by the blood of so many martyrs, among them the great and holy Apostles, Peter and Paul. The faith they preached in Antioch, in Rome and in so many other parts of the world is the faith we too are trying to bring to men today. We are happy to be able to address these few words before bishops of the Roman Catholic Church who are meeting to study the ways by which this proclamation of the faith may be done most effectively so as to meet the needs of men today. May almighty God guide your efforts and bless them with success.

The joy of this occasion encourages us to look forward to the great day on which our common Lord will bring us together into the one visible Church that will manifest His own unique glory. Towards that end we and our clergy and people will work by our prayers, our studies and our action. It is our hope that this can be done in common with the members of your own Church wherever possible.

As we return from here, we carry with us profound memories of Your Holiness and your great Church, to be cherished forever in the annals of the Apostolic See of Antioch. May almighty God continue to sustain Your Holiness in good health and strength of spirit to carry on the great work of the Church in the world, to the glory of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

#### The Joint Statement

After the Patriarch's address, Cardinal Willebrands read the following joint statement, issued by both Supreme Prelates, to those assembled:

As they conclude their solemn meeting which marks a new step in the relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Mar Ignatius Jacob III humbly render



thanks to Almighty God, for having made possible this historic opportunity to pray together, to engage in a fraternal exchange of views concerning the needs of the Church of God and to witness to their common desire that all Christians may intensify their service to the world with humility and complete dedication.

The Pope and the Patriarch have recognized the deep spiritual communion which already exists between their Churches. The celebration of the sacraments of the Lord, the common profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God made man for man's salvation, the apostolic traditions which form part of the common heritage of both Churches, the great Fathers and Doctors, including Saint Cyril of Alexandria, who are their common masters in the faith - all these testify to the action of the Holy Spirit who has continued to work in their Churches even when there have been human weakness and failings. The period of mutual recrimination and condemnation has given place to a willingness to meet together in sincere efforts to lighten and eventually remove the burden of history which still weighs heavily upon Christians.

Progress has already been made and Pope Paul VI and the Patriarch Mar Ignatius Jacob III are in agreement that there is no difference in the faith they profess concerning the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and become really man, even if over the centuries difficulties have arisen out of the different theological expressions by which this faith was expressed. They therefore encourage the clergy and faithful of their Churches to even greater endeavours at removing the obstacles which still prevent complete communion among them. This should be done with love, with openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and with mutual respect for each other and each other's Church. They particularly exhort the scholars of their Churches, and of all Christian communities, to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of Christ with humility and fidelity to the Apostolic traditions so that the fruits of their reflections may help



the Church in her service to the world which the Incarnate Son of God has redeemed.

This world, which God so loved as to send His only begotten Son, is torn by strife, by injustice and by the inhumanity of man towards man. As Christian Pastors, the Pope and the Patriarch raise their common appeal to the leaders of the peoples to increase the efforts towards achieving lasting peace among nations and towards removing the obstacles which prevent so many men from enjoying the fruits of justice and religious freedom. Their appeal is directed to all areas of the world and in particular to that land hallowed by the preaching, the death and the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Both Pope Paul and Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub III now signed the above statement, after which all assembled offered thanks to God by the recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

The historic meeting was ended by a final brotherly embrace by the two Church Heads, following which all the assembled broke forth into joyous applause that manifested the great joy and hope shared in by all present. Then the Pope accompanied the Patriarch to the courtyard of San Damaso, where the Pope remained to bid farewell to us. The hope of future meetings and of ever deepening understanding was reflected in the eyes of the two Church Leaders as they took their leave of one another.

The Consecration of His Holiness Pope

Shnouda III, Coptic Orthodox

Patriarch of Alexandria

Upon the election of the new Coptic Pope of Alexandria, a special invitation was extended to His Holiness Ignatius Yacoub III to participate in the consecration of His Holiness Pope Shnouda III. His Holiness our



Patriarch kindly asked Mar Severius Hawa and myself to accompany him to Cairo for the ceremony. Sunday, November 14, 1971, leading government and ecclesiastical heads assembled for the consecration of Pope Shnouda III. At 9:30 on the morning of November 14th, a procession of archbishops, priests, and deacons formed in front of the residence of Pope Shnouda. The procession then accompanied the new Pope to the door of Cairo's St. Mark's Cathedral. Pope Shnouda was now presented the key to the Cathedral by the Cathedral's archdeacon. Following a short service at the Cathedral's entrance, Pope Shnouda III entered the Cathedral preceded by a great procession of clergy. The bells of St. Mark's Cathedral now rang forth and the new Pope proceeded to the high altar amid a spirit of great joy. At the altar, all knelt down in reverence, following which Pope Shnouda took his place between two archbishops. The election notice was now officially read to the new Pope. Anba Antonius presently addressed the new Pope, solemnly stating: "We call you Pope Shnouda. You are the Pope of Alexandria." The entire congregation now thrice responded: "He is worthy." A crown of precious stones was now placed upon the new Pope's head. Following this, His Holiness Mar Ignatius Yacoub III and we were invited to begin the ceremony of consecration. We now proceeded to consecrate Pope Shnouda III according to our own Syriac tradition. His Holiness our Patriarch approached the Pope and placed an eskimo, the traditional hood worn by our monks, upon the new Pope's head. It is of interest to note that Pope Shnouda was the superior of the Coptic monastery known for centuries as the Syrian Monastery. His Holiness Mar Ignatius Yacoub III delivered the day's sermon, upon completion of which the Armenian and Ethiopian prelates present offered up special prayers for Pope Shnouda. The new



Pope was now taken to the high altar, where he was presented with his staff of office and a hand-cross. Pope Shnouda was now led to and seated upon the Patriarchal Throne. The representative of Haile Selassie now read a word of congratulation to the new Pope and presented him with Ethiopia's highest decoration. Following this, Pope Shnouda began the Holy Liturgy, accompanied by His Holiness our Patriarch and by Mar Severius Hawa and myself, together with our brother Armenian and Ethiopian prelates. At the end of the Liturgy, His Holiness Ignatius Yacoub III and each of the Coptic archbishops present signed the official proclamation proclaiming the consecration of Pope Shnouda III. The following day, November 15, 1971, we accompanied His Holiness our Patriarch to Pope Shnouda's residence to offer the new Pope our warmest congratulations and brotherly regards.

My Visits to Syria, Turkey,  
and Kuwait

Upon the invitations of our archbishops in Syria, I visited our families in Aleppo, Homs, and Gezirah. Wherever I went, I was received with great joy and celebration. Together with Archbishop Dionysius Grgis of Aleppo and Mar Stateos Kyriakose of Gezirah, I crossed from Syria into Turkey, where we visited Mardin and Midyat. While in Turkey, I paid a visit to St. Gabriel's Monastery near Midyat. Here, I was able to examine the new portions of the Monastery that I helped to build. Included in this new addition to St. Gabriel's are many nice rooms and a large reception hall. Moreover, I was shown the bell



tower that I donated the funds to construct. The entire community of St. Gabriel's Monastery was happy to receive us, and I was extremely pleased to see how our beloved St. Gabriel's Monastery is progressing so wonderfully.

On Thursday, February 3, 1972, I flew to Kuwait, accompanied by Mar Timotheus Afram Aboudi, our new Apostolic Delegate to India. On January 9, 1972, I had participated in the consecration of Archbishop Timotheus in Beirut's Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul. His Holiness our Patriarch had asked me to accompany our new Metropolitan to India, but in order to return to my home Archdiocese as soon as possible, I decided to accompany Mar Timotheus only as far as Kuwait.

We were received at the airport by a large delegation of our families living and working in Kuwait. On Wednesday, February 9, 1972, I flew from Kuwait to Basra, Iraq, where I was warmly welcomed by our local families. I spent a week in Basra, celebrating the Holy Liturgy for our community there on Sunday, February 13, 1972. I then returned to Kuwait, where on Sunday, February 20, 1972, I celebrated Holy Liturgy for our faithful in Kuwait. The following Tuesday, I flew back to Beirut, where I remained until Saturday, March 4, 1972, when I left Lebanon to return to the United States and my beloved Archdiocese.





